

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 NEA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05 ACDA-12 /114 W

-----006437 031308Z /21

P 030751Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 872

INFO AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

USLO PEKING PRIORITY

CINCPAC

COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L VICTORIA 388

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SE

SUBJECT: TWENTY-ONE ACCUSED OF TREASON; EMERGENCY SECURITY
MEASURES TO BE IMPOSED

REF: A) VICTORIA 376 (DTG 291802Z APR 78) NOTAL; B) VICTORIA 379
(DTG 010900Z MAY 78) NOTAL

1. IN COURT PROCEEDINGS LATE AFTERNOON MAY 2, TWENTY-ONE
SEYCHELLOIS FROM AMONG UNDETERMINED NUMBER DETAINED IN LARGE-
SCALE APRIL 29-30 POLICE SWEEP (RETELS REFER) WERE FORMALLY
CHARGED IN ABSENTIA WITH TREASON. UNDER SEYCHELLES' LAW,
MAXIMUM SENTENCE FOR CONVICTION OF TREASON IS DEATH. TREASON
IS ONLY OFFENSE PUNISHABLE BY THE DEATH PENALTY. AMONG THOSE
ARRAIGNED WERE FORMER M.P.'S FROM DEPOSED PRESIDENT MANCHAM'S
SDP POLITICAL PARTY (ROBERT FRICHOT, DAN PAYET), OWEN HOAREAU
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WHO LED ABORTIVE EFFORT THREE MONTHS AGO TO REVITALIZE SDP
(VICTORIA 185 NOTAL; 220 NOTAL), MIDDLE-GRADE CIVIL SERVANTS
AND ASSORTMENT OF SEMI AND UNSKILLED WORKERS. ALSO INCLUDED
ON LIST READ IN OPEN COURT WAS MARIE ANGE JENRETTE (CORRECTED
SPELLING), SEYCHELLOIS WIFE OF CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE AT U.S.A.F.
SATELLITE TRACKING STATION WHOM MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
BERLOUIS HAS ASSURED CHARGE WILL BE ALLOWED TO DEPART COUNTRY

IN NEXT FEW DAYS. POLICE COMMISSIONER PILLAY AND REPRESENTATIVE FROM ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE HAVE AGREED TO REQUEST FROM ACTING CHIEF JUSTICE ANDRE SAUZIER (WHO IS EXPECTED TO HEAR CASES) TO PRODUCE EVIDENCE AGAINST THOSE ACCUSED BY MAY 5. NEWS OF CHARGES LEVIED BY GOVERNMENT HAS STUNNED POPULATION. ACCORDING LOCAL ATTORNEY, LAST TREASON TRIAL IN SEYCHELLES TOOK PLACE IN 1921.

2. ONLY THREE HOURS AFTER NEWS OF COURT PROCEEDINGS HAD SPREAD THROUGH SMALL SEYCHELLOIS COMMUNITY, RADIO SEYCHELLES CARRIED ANNOUNCEMENT THAT EFFECTIVE MAY 3, UNSPECIFIED EMERGENCY SECURITY MEASURES WOULD COME INTO FORCE. AT PRESENT, EMBASSY HAS NO INDICATION WHAT THESE MAY BE, BUT RIGHTS OF ASSEMBLY AND/OR ASSOCIATION AND PRESS CENSORSHIP WOULD APPEAR TO BE POSSIBLE COURSES OF GOS ACTION. ON OTHER HAND, (OR IN ADDITION) GOS MAY BE SEEKING EMERGENCY POWERS IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TO DETAIN ACCUSED WITHOUT TRIAL. RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT STATED PRESIDENT RENE, CURRENTLY IN PRC ON OFFICIAL VISIT, HAD PERSONALLY ORDERED NEW SECURITY MEASURES. SPECULATION IS EMERGING WHY RENE, IN FACE OF "GRAVE THREAT AGAINST SECURITY OF THE STATE" HAS NOT CURTAILED HIS OVERSEAS VISIT TO PRC TO RETURN HOME TO DEAL PERSONALLY WITH SITUATION. (RENE NOT SCHEDULED TO RETURN TO SEYCHELLES UNTIL MAY 11.)

3. ACCORDING SOURCES PRESENT IN COURT, SAUZIER EMPHASIZED THAT COURT IS "GUARANTOR OF THE RIGHTS OF THE ACCUSED" AND CONFIDENTIAL

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ORDERED GOVERNMENT MEDICAL OFFICER TO VISIT ACCUSED EVERY DAY AND REPORT BACK TO HIM ANY PRISONER COMPLAINTS. ATTORNEY REPRESENTING MOST OF THOSE ACCUSED HAS TOLD EMBASSY THAT PRISONERS WOULD BE BROUGHT TO COURT AT 0900 MAY 4.

4. IN CONVERSATION EARLY AFTERNOON MAY 2, MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS BERLOUIS TOLD BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER PUGH THAT GOVERNMENT, HAVING FAILED IN ITS EFFORTS AT "GENTLE UNIFICATION" OF SEYCHELLOIS IN AFTERMATH OF JUNE 5, 1977 COUP D'ETAT, IS DETERMINED "TO MAKE CLEAN SWEEP" OF DISSIDENT ELEMENTS WITHOUT REGARD TO ADVERSE INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY. BERLOUIS ADDED SECURITY OPERATIONS NOW IN MOTION COULD CONTINUE FOR SEVERAL DAYS. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM HIGH COMMISSIONER, BERLOUIS ADMITTED THAT GOS WANTED TO ACT WHILE DEMILITARIZATION CONFERENCE WAS IN SESSION (REFTEL A) BUT HAD TO WAIT UNTIL ARMS HAD BEEN LOCATED. HE ADDED SECURITY FORCES WOULD HAVE ARRESTED ALLEGED CONSPIRATORS PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF CONFERENCE HAD WEAPONS BEEN FOUND.

5. BERLOUIS, FOLLOWING UP ON CRITICISM OF KENYAN GOVERNMENT RECENTLY EXPRESSED BY FOREIGN MINISTER SINON, CONFIRMED TO

PUGH THAT GOK HAD BEEN REPEATEDLY ASKED TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGED "SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES" IN KENYA BY FORMER MINISTER JOUBERT AND GOS ASSERTION THAT SHIP WAS IN MOMBASSA FOR PURPOSE OF TRANSPORTING MERCENARIES TO SEYCHELLES. BERLOUIS CLAIMED THAT NOT ONLY HAD GOK NOT RESPONDED TO ANY CORRESPONDENCE ON THIS MATTER--OR EVEN ACKNOWLEDGED ITS RECEIPT--BUT THAT GOS HAS REASON TO BELIEVE COPIES OF CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO JOUBERT'S ACTIVITIES IN KENYA HAVE BEEN PASSED TO JOUBERT.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH CONDITIONS REMAIN CALM, PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION EXTREMELY FLUID. WHILE EMBASSY IS DOUBTFUL THAT GOS INTENDS TO PROSECUTE TO FULLEST EXTENT MANY OF THOSE ARRAIGNED MAY 2, IT MAY DESIRE TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF SOME
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ALLEGED HARDCORE OPPONENTS. WHATEVER COURT ACTION GOVERNMENT MAY BE CONTEMPLATING, IT WILL HAVE TO PROVE ITS CASE CONCLUSIVELY IF JUSTICE SAUZIER, WHO IS WIDELY REGARDED LOCALLY AS AN INDEPENDANT, HIGH-PRINCIPLED AND CONSCIENTIOUS JURIST, IS ON THE BENCH. ALTHOUGH LATEST GOS ACTIONS MAY PROVE EFFECTIVE OVER SHORT TERM IN INSURING ITS SECURITY FROM ALLEGED COUNTER-COUP THREAT AND ACTIVITIES OF PERSISTENT OPPONENTS, PRICE MAY BE IRREVERSIBLE POLARIZATION OF CLOSELY INTER-RELATED, INDIVIDUALISTIC AND DEMOCRATIC-MINDED POPULATION. ANOTHER LIKELY CASUALTY OF EVENTS OVER PAST SEVERAL DAYS COULD BE SEYCHELLES' CAREFULLY NURTURED REPUTATION ABROAD AS A RELAXED, OPEN AND FRIENDLY SOCIETY. OBSCURE ROLE OF PRESIDENT RENE IN ENTIRE AFFAIR IS A CRITICAL AND THUS FAR UNKNOWN FACTOR.
MATTSON

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